

Exploring Humanity Values through “Gift of Life” by Regular Blood Donor among University Students

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Abstract. A regular blood donor is an individual who regularly donates blood to a blood bank. This paper aims to discuss the capability of individual humanity to create a consistent regular blood donor community. In-depth interview with a sample of eight regular blood donors amongst university students was used in the study. Respondents donated their blood more than three (3) times in the last two years. The participation of the respondents was voluntarily. The topic of discussion explored individual humanity that motivates the respondents to donate their blood regularly. Results showed that there were six themes of humanity values in repeat blood donors, which are a sense of responsibility, empathy, self-efficacy, altruism, warm glow, and religiosity aspects. This study implies that parties involved in blood donation campaign need to strengthen these aspects of humanity through various ways such as programs, recognition and training amongst university students to ensure the adequacy of voluntarily blood supply in the future.

Keywords: Regular Blood Donors, Humanity Values, University Students

1. Introduction

Due to ageing population and increase in birth rate, the demand for blood in various medicinal aspects have increased from time to time[1]. Besides that, blood is also needed for transfusion in blood-related diseases, accident victims, maternal complications during childbirth, leukemia treatment, and as well as any physical injuries that require blood substitution. One of the reasons for the difficulty to meet the demand is because of the decline in blood supply[2]. Decline in blood supply occurs due to demographic factors such as age reasons, health. It is thus important to recruit new blood donors, as well as to retain these blood donors, which is the biggest challenge for the responsible organization[3]. The record administrative costs for donor retention, which is cheaper than recruiting new donors, should be a driving factor to retain blood donors.

National Blood Centre (NBC) in Malaysia has outlined several criteria for blood donor based on the standard guidelines of World Health Organization (WHO). The criteria include individuals aged between 18-60 years, being healthy, not prescribed from any medicine in a given period, not engaging in high risk behavior (such as drug abuse, prostitution, homosexuality or having multiple sex partners), and have no medical problems. As such, university students are the ideal group for the purpose of this study going by these criteria. According to Allesandrini (2007)[3], university students are the one considered as the most eligible for blood donation based on their capability in providing the supply for a longer period compared to older groups.

In Malaysia, blood donors donating blood at NBC and government hospital blood banks are voluntary and non-remunerated. Through these two terms, it is clearly reflects that the blood donation activities in Malaysia are a voluntary program and there is no coercion imposed on individual to donate blood. However, depending on voluntarism aspects to guarantee of the adequacy blood supply is not sufficient. The most important is to nurture a responsibility awareness of the blood donors in order to maintain the blood storage. Ringwald et al. (2010)[4] have suggested that to keep someone as a continuous blood donor, the behavior must be driven by inner motivation. The continuous behavior may lead to the nurturing the identity as a blood donor. Having an identity as a blood donor itself is a motivation for oneself because of the perception

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of society, which affects the blood donors. In other words, having an identity as blood donors brings a positive impact on them to keep donating. The frequency of donation thus will result in the creation of an identity as a blood donor. Masser et al. (2008)[5] stated that individuals who donate at least three times have identified themselves as having the blood donor identity which will affect the consistency of their blood donation activities.

This clearly explains that the identity can be strengthened through active donation i.e. donating more than three times. In this paperwork, the definition of a regular donors is an individual who donates blood three times or more for the past two years. Although Ringwald et al. (2010)[4] have stated that factor of public perception plays an important role for a regular blood donor activities, where else study done by Bednall and Bove (2011)[6] found that inner motivation factor as one of the significant factors that cause them to do so. These blood donors considered their actions as to save other lives, for communal benefits and they believe that it is the right thing to do. According to Mumtazah and Nurizan (2009)[7], values are defined as good behavior, civilization and human decency in relation to individual human beings, nature and God. Whereas Mohammed Kamil and Rahimin (2009)[8] define the value of humanity as a capital or asset that refers to the individual capability through cognitive aspect, attitude, and skill within themselves. It encompasses the mind, and also the display on behavior. It refers to the positive internal and external aspects. Therefore, the aspects of humanity or the individual humanity may act as a mechanism for continuing to do things, reinforcing the positives in life. In blood donation activities, even though environment aspect may act as a catalyst, still the humanity values that exists within the donor act as a motivation factors to maintain the intention to donate blood. Therefore, this study aims to explore the humanity values that exist in university students as blood donors that motivate them to become repeat blood donors. In this study, we define blood donation as “gift of life” following the work of Titmuss (1970)[9] as it reflects the gift of life from one person to another.

2. Problem Statement

Statistic by NBC (2012) showed 41888 from 162 004 donors were students. Through this statistic, it shows that in spite of being engage in hectic life as college students, there are individuals that show a commitment to help other people through this noble act. Therefore, this article aims to delve the humanity aspects, which exist in the regular blood donors and to explore factors that motivate these donors in public higher institution to donate blood continuously.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative study using sampling of snowballing approach to obtain the required information. The researcher has identified the active repeating donor through a special form given to blood donors during blood donating campaign in one of the local university. The form consist the introduction of the study, objectives, column for name, contact number and number of previous blood donation. Based on the number of previous blood donation, the researcher contacted the respondents through their phone number. These respondents were asked if they have friends that are also an active regular blood donors and willing to participate in the discussion. Once contacted, interview sessions were set up among respondents and researcher. Three sessions of in-depth interviews were conducted in March 2012 with eight active regular donors. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes up to one hour. Respondents were asked about their motivation in donating blood. All information obtained in this sessions has been recorded using a decoder and transcribed. Respondents obtained a copy of particular transcript for themselves as member-checking. This is to ensure the accuracy of transcribed data during the interviews. This study involved eight Malay respondents who were all still students during the interview sessions (four males and four females). The numbers of blood donation frequency are three to six times in the last two years. Table 1 below shows the profile of active blood donor.

Table 1: Profile of active blood donors

Respondents	Gender	Age (Years)	Numbers of donation	Type of blood
Respondent A	Male		20	Four
Respondent B	Male		21	Four
Respondent C	Female	20		Three
Respondent D	Male	22		Three
Respondent E	Male		26	Six
Respondent F	Female	26		Five
Respondent G	Female	23		Three
Respondent H	Female		26	Four

4. Result and Discussion

The researcher obtained six themes of humanity aspects among the regular active blood donors. Results were discussed through the six themes.

4.1. A Sense of Responsibility

This study found that the responsibility aspect is one of the factors that contribute the continuity of donation activity. Social responsibility exists within the individual caused by the person norms[10]. In this discussion, Respondent B agreed that a sense of responsibility to others lead them to donate blood continuously without having the knowledge that whom they are. *“When I think other people who involves in accidents, and there is lack of blood supply, I feel I need to help them.” (RESP B)*. In addition, Respondent F (RESP F) also shared her experience of knowing a blood donor during a campaign—because of a sense of responsibility towards her friend in need, she willingly went for a blood donation as she mention *“She is having a loss of consciousness during the donation because she is a first timer. We have a short chat during the donation and she did mention that her friend is warded presently (respondent is referring to her conversation with other people during blood donation)*. This finding showed that a sense of responsibility will arise during a crisis in particular situations, for example, an accident or due to health reasons. This is due to self-experience involving blood which can lead to the feeling of empathy toward others. Whilst for Respondent E, feeling of responsibility toward other people that received his blood means that the blood supply must be clean, healthy and not contaminated with other things, such as viruses or medicine.

4.2. Sense of Empathy

Empathy was define as an emotional response in someone, which is parallel with the perceptions of welfare needs to other person and motivates a person to feel sad, compassionate, and being warm to others. In this study, researchers found that Respondent B has a strong sense of empathy. This is reflected in his response *“When I think other people who involved in accidents, and there is lack of blood supply, I feel I need to help them. The sense arises from nowhere. This is my way to help them, by donating blood.” (RESP B)*. While having sense that the action can help others, Respondent C mentioned *“... a sense to help others make me feel to keep donating...”* Interestingly, in this study according to Respondents D and H, negative experience does not prevent them to keep donating. Both respondents stated that the process of donating blood even thought not a pleasant situation, still they have the intention to donate in the future, such as : *“There is nothing to be afraid. We just need to lay down. Of course, everybody will nervous when seeing a huge syringe. But, it is not hurtful at all. Indeed, I will come and keep donating.” (RESP D)*. From the response of blood donors, negative experiences of blood donors will not affect the empathy aspect. This shows that an empathy aspect in blood donors is more effective than the donor's negative experience.

4.3. Altruism

Donating blood behavior is driven by aspect of altruism; a desire to contribute for the benefit of others. The result of this study found that the most of blood donors were driven by a sense to help others. Respondents B, C and E agreed that a desire to help others motivated them to donate blood, without having a knowledge who the recipients were. Assuming that the donated blood will give benefits to many people, Respondent F state *“A drop of our blood, we will never know who are the recipients. Therefore, the more we donate, there are more people will get benefit from us” (RESP F)*. These findings showed that although the respondents are students who aged of 20 years old, a desire for helping others has existed in themselves.

Furthermore, feedbacks from the respondents indicate that blood donors consider helping others; donating blood is a noble activity.

4.4. Warm-Glow

Warm-glow is a positive feeling that exists in a person due to his action. For respondent A, D and E, the aspect of warm glow is caused by able to do something new. *“I am truly happy for trying a new thing. I am delighted for able to help people and it makes me speechless. For example, if I donate blood for a B-typed person, the recipient; it means he might have my blood forever.”*(RESP B). Respondent A also considered that the factor of knowing the donated blood will benefit the recipients, it lead him to the good feeling. For Respondent D and E, they mention on fun feeling after donating blood for the first time: *“I take an initiative to try, having a blood donation. I feel fun doing it.”*(RESP D) and *“My first time experience of having a blood donation, I feel quite nervous. However, I found it is fun, it feels like something new inserted to our body”* (RESP E). While for Respondent D, he linked the aspect of happiness and satisfaction as inter-correlated with blood donation: *“...I get a satisfaction after the process...and I named the feeling of satisfaction as happiness for those who donate...”*(RESP D). Apart from gaining new experience and feeling happy about it, the respondents are happy when donating blood because they able to help those in needs. This shows that a desire to try something new as a blood donor may lead to a happy feeling due to the contribution they made. In addition, both of respondent F and H admit this activity makes them happy: *“For me, I am happy when I have an opportunity to donate but of course it makes me sad if I’m unable”*(RESP F). These findings implied that the warm glow aspect cause someone to maintain in the activity or action they engaged. The aspect of warm glow is an inner motivation felt by the blood donors. It is a sense of happiness and being good after the donation. Even though there are respondents who admit the nervousness of having a first time donating experience, however, the negative feeling however was overcome by the existence of positive feeling after donation.

4.5. Religiosity Aspect

Researcher also found that the religiosity aspect, which involves the feeling of doing good act is also a factor for respondents continue to donate blood. The belief of *pahala* as good reward in Muslim life is related to aspect of seeing this action as good deeds. Respondent A considered that he would receive the same benefit if the recipients of his blood practice good things, as it can be seen as a reciprocate feelings. *“For me, I share the same pahala when the person that received my blood engage in good behavior. We both get the benefit”* (RESP A). At the same time, a sense of gratitude of having good health endowed them to donate blood also can be seen as one of the reason for continuing blood donation activities as Respondent C has stated that she was grateful for having a good health, which makes her eligible to donate blood in order to help others. *“I’m thankful to God for being healthy. So that, I can donate blood. Well, I feel that I’m blessed, you know. There are many people who can’t engage in this activity for various reasons, for example, being underweight, abnormal blood pressure and so on.”*(RESP C). These findings indicate that the blood donors considered on rewarding perception while engaging in blood donation. Besides, being thankful for having a good health also may create an inner motivation for the donors.

4.6. Self-Efficacy

The last aspects of these values in the respondents of this focus group discussion were based on self-efficacy that exists amongst the donors of university students. Individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit a high level of confidence in the decisions made. Several studies have found that the self-efficacy aspect is one of the reasons that motivate blood donors to continue^{3,7}. Respondents B and G believed the decision to donate were because of themselves. *“I do admit peers factor also play the roles. But I do believe that I myself want to do this.”* (RESP B) and *“The main factor is me myself. I see people go for a donation. Even my friends refuse to join, I’ll go by myself.”* (RESP G). While Respondent D deals with his emotion and claimed even though he did felt scared during the process, but still managed to get control of it. *“....indeed, anyone will be afraid of needles. And then after the needles was inserted correctly, we do not feel much fear. And then we feel like some sort of fun feeling. And come to think back, I can donations again, it’s a no pain process, and is so easily”* (RESP D). Having a confidence for blood donation reflects that both Respondent E

and G have a strong stance in a decision-making. To explore the value of the self-efficacy, researchers have tried to find the barriers that may exist on the respondent and whether it affects their decision. Respondent A and B have stated that there are no obstacles for engaging in blood donation. In contrast, Respondent C has received an obstacle from her worrying mother as she mention “*No one except my mum seems worried and objected when she knows I am having a blood donation. However, I stick with my decision because there are no negative effects. Indeed, I did donate for two or three times. This is a good practice and I will continue. I think my mum just afraid of the possibility that I might fainted after donating*”. As regular donors, they also face their own pressure in order to continue this activity. However, having a confidence to manage the situation drive them to become regular blood donors.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Through interviews with active regular blood donors, it was found that there are six aspects of humanity values of the blood donors. Based on these six aspects, two major categories were derived; internal factor and external factor. The internal factor comprised of self-confidence, religiosity, altruism, empathy and warm-glow. The external factor, in which the act was based on social responsibility. Both main categories indicate that the values of humanity in individuals are mutually dependent in order to maintain the blood donation among university students. Thus, the findings from the discussion implies that the humanity values of regular blood donors can be strengthened through various ways such as programs or campaigns by certain responsible parties in Malaysia as an efforts to produce more stable community donor for a long term. Limitations of this study only focusing on the active regular blood donors in higher education institutions, whilst all respondents in this study group is Muslim and representing only Islam religion. Future research should focus on wide range of variables such as type of donors (new, non-donor or lapsed), difference races and religious.

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